

The Retributions of Charity.

A
S E R M O N

Preach'd before the

LORD-MAYOR,

T H E

Court of ALDERMEN,

S H E R I F F S,

A N D T H E

GOVERNORS of the several HOSPITALS

I N T H E

CITY of LONDON,

A T

St. BRIDGET'S CHURCH,

On April 7, 1735. being Monday in Easter Week.

B Y

The Right Reverend Father in GOD

RICHARD Lord Bishop of LINCOLN.

Reynolds

L O N D O N, *⓪*

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CONYERS *Locum Tenens.*

BELLAMY MAYOR.

Tuesday the 22d Day of April,
1735. and in the eighth Year of
the Reign of King GEORGE the
Second, of Great-Britain, &c.

IT is ordered, That the Thanks of
this Court be given to the Right
Reverend Father in God the Lord Bi-
shop of *Lincoln* for his Sermon preached
before this Court, and the Governors of
the several Hospitals of this City at the
Parish Church of *St. Bridget*, on *Mon-*
day in *Easter Weest* last, and that he be
desired to print the same.

JACKSON.



2 COR. ix. 8.

*And God is able to make all
Grace abound towards you;
that ye always having all
sufficiency in all things, may
abound to every good work.*

Corinth the Metropolis of *Achaia*, to the Churches of which this Epistle stands inscrib'd, was in the Age of the Apostles famous for Wealth and Learning; the Commodiousness of their Situation for Commerce brought them in Abundance of Wealth, and this brought in Rhetoricians and Philosophers from every Quarter. And, what was yet an higher Commendation of this polite and wealthy City, the Inhabitants were, many of them, well dispos'd to receive the Gospel; for, so much our Lord himself intimated to *St. Paul* at his first coming hither, in a Vision assuring him, *that he had much People in this City.* But, in so populous a Place, it is no
B wonder

wonder if there were found a mixed Multitude, if amongst the well disposed, there were some that were otherwise minded; some, easy to be drawn aside by the Vanity of Philosophy, or, by the popular Rhetoric of false Apostles, engaged in Factions for their *Paul's*, and *Apollos's*; some solicitous to multiply their growing Stores, others as industrious to dissipate them, in all the Instances of riotous and licentious Living.

These are the Snares and Temptations which ordinarily beset a prosperous State; with some of these were many of the *Corinthians* entangled, and many more, probably, endangered, when the good and careful Physician interpos'd his Advice to cure, or, at least to stop the growing Evil; for the Factious and Licentious, he appoints the Remedies, and the Discipline proper to their Cases, as in the third and fifth Chapters of the first Epistle; and then for such as might doat too much upon their Riches, or misapply them, he prepares the elegant and moving Application, of which my Text is a Part.

In the Chapter next before this he artfully represents the Forwardness of those of *Macedonia*, who, under many Streights, had to their Power, and even beyond their Power, contributed to the Relief of their Brethren; and had been so far from needing Exhortation to this, that they had, of their own Motion, besought him to receive their Gift, *ŷ* 4. Next, he lays before them a most powerful Motive to Liberality, the Grace and gracious Example of
Christ,

Christ, who, for their Sake *became Poor*, that they by his Poverty might *become Rich*, *ſ 9*. And then closes, with an Anticipation of the most considerable Objection to all Arguments upon this Subject, *viz.* The Fear of being impoverish'd by their Liberality, assuring them, that as God had promis'd, he was both faithful and able to make them, not the poorer, but the richer for the Alms they bestow'd, to multiply their Distributions *like the Seed that is sown*, *ſ 10*. that having, continually, a Sufficiency in all Things, they might always have enough for themselves, and for every proper Object of Charity that should be offer'd unto them.

This being the Scope of the Argument, I shall, in pursuance of it, beg Leave to observe to you,

I. The Nature, Extent, and Obligation of the Duty recommended; the Duty of abounding to good Works.

II. The Reasons why those who are rich in this World, as the *Corinthians* were, are, more especially, to be call'd upon, and pressed to the Performance of this Duty.

III. The Inducement propounded, God's Ability to make this Grace abound; by way of Exhortation.

I. *First* then, to abound unto good Works is to have a constant and forward Disposition to do good, and this to express in all Acts of Beneficence to all Men, on all Occasions, on

Principles of Faith and Charity, of Faith in God, and Love to Mankind.

This implies, that a Man is to look upon himself as obliged to do some good in his Life; not sent into the World barely to *take his Pastime herein*; not born for himself, nor to live for himself, to seek his own, and that only, *but every one his Brother's Wealth.*

And, according to this Description, it is not every flash of good Nature, or every easy Concession wrung out by dint of Importunity, or force of Example, that deserves to be accounted a just Expression of this Duty. It should be always the Result of a fix'd, and habitual Benevolence, of such a Goodness and Tenderneſs of Mind as neither wants nor waits for Provocation, but is at all Times ready, of its own Accord, to look out and ſeek for Opportunities of doing good to the Souls or Bodies of Men; and, when ſuch Opportunities are either found or do preſent themſelves, performs the proper Office, not grudgingly, or as of Neceſſity, but with abounding Chearfulneſs becoming the Service of God, who *loveth the chearful Giver*, and rewardeth the willing and obedient Servant. Whatever good Works proceed not upon this Principle of endeavouring, as much as lyeth in us, the Good and Happineſs of all Men, as moſt agreeable to the Will and Appointment of God, is undoubtedly but a falſe Show, is Intrigue or Vanity, may be blowing the Trumpet or liſting of Followers, but can never be the Grace commended by St. Paul, that Chriſtian Charity without which, if a Man gives

gives all his Goods to the Poor, the Profusion shall profit him nothing.

That, for Instance, can be no Gospel Liberality which flows not from the Benignity of the Heart, but the Weakness of the Head, over-reach'd, or over-aw'd by Usurpations, or Impositions. That can be no good Work, which is given to no good Use; given, not to relieve Mens Wants, or reform their Manners, but to purchase Pardon for old Sins, or Licence for new ones; that can never be the faithful and the acceptable Charity, which, (instead of bringing Glory to God, and Increase to his Gospel, as our charitable Foundations do, by being Eyes to the Blind, and Feet to the Lame, Food and Physic, and Discipline to such as want them) idly wastes itself on Crusadoes, Pilgrimages and Processions, on Roods, and Reliques, and *Agnus Dei's*, and such like empty Shows of Devotion.

Those were the genuine, as they are the more useful Expressions of Christian Charity, which appear'd as the First-Fruits of our Reformation upon the Expulsion of Popery with all its idle and voracious Retinue. I mean the Endowments of Schools, and Hospitals, the Light and Use of which good Works display themselves in all Parts of our Land, but more abundantly in this Metropolis, ever famous for her Hospitalities, truly a Mother in her indulgent Provisions for the Wants and Misfortunes of all her Children, and to the other Cities of the Land, a worthy Pattern of pious, and faithful Economy. So that should the Fautors of Popery renew against us their Charge of Sacrilege,

lege, should they accuse us, as the Heathens of old accused the primitive Christians, for having taken up a new, and cheap Religion, only to save the Costs and Charges of the old — we may justly answer them in the Words of a learned Apologist in that Age, “ *It is true we waste not so much Wealth as you do in empty Shows, and superstitious Oblations, but we spend more in Charity, in true Christian Charity, on the Poor and Needy, than all your costly Devotions amount to.*”

For though, upon the Dissolution of Monasteries nine Parts in ten, as some compute, of their redundant Wealth, were restored to the Body of the People, from whose misguided Zeal they had receiv'd it, yet, of the remaining Part hath there been such an happy Increase, of the Fragments left, so many Baskets full, that out of this one Tenth so recover'd from Misapplication and Abuse, Schools and Hospitals have been erected, many more in Number than the Monasteries suppress'd; and the Poor and Impotent Fed and Taught, Reform'd, and Restor'd to themselves and the Common-Wealth in our Protestant Convents, are and have been not only ten Times as many, but ten thousand Times better intituled to the Charity of *Christians*, than those Legions of Papal Partizans aforetime quarter'd in our Monastic Barracks, to Eat up the Good of the Land, to drain the Wealth of it into foreign Coffers, and Rule with Rods of Iron, the Rulers of our People.

And

And as it was no Deviation from, but a just and close Prosecution of the original Plan of your famous Protestant Foundations, when, in the latter End of the last Century, and under Apprehensions of the Return of Popery, the wise Men of that Time set themselves to provide a competent Number of smaller Hospitals, or parochial Nurseries for the Christian Education of poor destitute Children, *and for securing to them Learning enough, with their Protestant Liberty, to read their Bibles, to see with their own Eyes, and judge with their own Understandings.* — I say — As this — from the latter End of the last Century, was the Progress of our reform'd Devotions, conformable to the Judgment of the first Reformers, and as our Fathers offer'd these Acts of Mercy, as Sacrifices seasonable, and proper, for averting the Judgments then apprehended, so, now, at this Time, when we are again alarm'd by the Boldness and Industry of the Popish Emissaries, it must be a seasonable Comfort to be assured, as we are, that the yearly Colonies sent out from these Nurseries, carry with them, to all the Places where they are planted, a general Notion of the fundamental Difference between our Religion and that of the Romanists, viz. that ours is a scriptural Religion, theirs, *as to all Points, in Controversy between us, not to be found in the Bible!*

A seasonable Comfort, to be thus assured, that by this evangelical Preparation, the Seed of good Knowledge thus sown, and growing up, as the Scholars grow in Years, and Understanding,

standing, the darkest Corners of our Land, will be so replenish'd with Gospel Light, and Learning, that where'er the Deceivers shall creep in, with their Purgatory, Pilgrimages, Saints, and Reliques, with their Penances, Pardons and Purifications, and the rest of their Devices, the least Learned of our Catechumens, will be prepared not only to confound their profoundest Doctors, with this one puzzling Question — What Warrant of Scripture have you for these Things? But to perform also the Part of good Citizens, as well as of good Christians, in as much as Scripture Knowledge raises Mens Regards for their civil, as well as for their religious Constitutions, not only, as Knowledge in every Degree contributes towards Mens making due Estimates of their social Rights, but as Scripture Knowledge in an especial Manner explains, and invigorates the Principle of a willing, and unforced Obedience to Government, from this awful Consideration, *that it is the Ordinance of God, for the Good of Mankind! A Principle which is, undoubtedly, — the highest Security to the higher Power, at the same Time as it suggests the strongest Reasons against all undue Extensions of it!*

Justly may we in the Words of *Moses* say to our *Israel*, what Nation is there that hath Statutes and Judgments so righteous? And what could we, as a People, have desired more, than to have this Happiness, as we now hope it is, fully and extensively understood. For, as the Lanthorn of God's Word lights the Bible-Scholars to the clearest Knowledge of this great
Branch

Branch of their Happiness, so must it dispose them to be, of all Men, most thankful and zealous for it, devoutly careful to pray for the Continuance of it, and forward, on just Occasions, with Christian Fortitude, to expose even their Lives for the Defence, and Preservation of it.

Let then the Idolatrous, or the Prophane *despise*, as they are wont, *the Armies of the Living God!* The Armour of Righteousness, a Sense of Religion, will be found, in the Day of Battle, the compleatest Armour against every Weapon, against all Attempts of secret Fraud, or open Violence: And if in these Schools this Armature, or the Matter of it is prepared, this Service sets a Value on the Institution, shews it to be *a Pearl of Price in our Field*, sufficient to justify against all Exceptions the Wisdom of those Merchants who have laid out, and yet lay out for the Purchase of it.

But tho' we see, with Thankfulness, the Wisdom, and the publick Spirit which wrought so gloriously in our first Reformers, to have descended, and, at this Time, to rest on many of their Children, yet can it not be said, that all are *Israel*, who are of *Israel!* Some fall short of the Spirit of their Religion, and of the Piety of their Fathers, *not careful to maintain good Works*, in Proportion to their Talents!

And this leads us, in the next Place, to set out the Reasons, why they who are rich in this World, are more especially to be called upon, and earnestly pressed to this Duty.

First, One obvious Reason arises from that Infatuation which is observ'd, many Times, to seize one Sort of thriving, wealthy Men; they seem to be the wakeful Guardians rather than the happy Owners of their Stores! They are insatiably greedy of Money whose whole Value is in its Usefulness, and yet they cannot use it, when they have it!

This is an Evil, as *Solomon* observes, *common amongst Men; there is a Man to whom God hath given Riches, Wealth, and Honour, so that he wanteth nothing of all that his Soul desireth, and yet he hath not power to eat thereof; Eccl. vi. 1.* Much less hath he Power to give thereof unto others, or to do therewith, any Act of Liberality or Beneficence. The End of all his Projects and Pursuits, is to be Rich; and then very Rich; and yet can he never think himself Rich enough to enjoy the Fruits of his Labours, to rejoice and do good in his Life.

Secondly, Another Reason, for this, may be, that Riches do often invite their Owners to expensive Luxuries, the Support of which, frequently makes larger Demands upon their Funds, than their ordinary Produce can well supply. And when Men are once taken in this Snare, they become hard to their Servants, cruel to their Tenants, exacting and rigorous with all their Correspondents, sagacious in foreseeing, and as dexterous in declining all Invitations to Expence on any pious or charitable Occasion. In a Word, ~~so~~ *ordidly* ~~tenacious~~ *tenacious* of what they have, and insatiably greedy of more — ~~that they may~~ *consume it upon their Lusts!* Whilst others of
v meaner

meaner Fortunes, wisely contenting themselves within the Bounds which God and Nature have assign'd them, do hereby secure a Sufficiency not only for answering all legal Demands, with Satisfaction to all, but also for giving to such as want, and for doing such Acts of Beneficence as are suitable to their Rank and Station in the World. — This then is also a Reason why the Rich are more especially to be reminded of this Duty; they lye more exposed than other Men to the Temptations of Luxury, and to sacrifice to their Vanities that Portion of their Goods which should be set apart for the Honour of God, and the Comfort of their indigent Brethren —.

Thirdly, Another Reason may be taken from their great Danger of being so elated with their Wealth, as to forget the Hand that gave it, and the End for which it was given.

This was the Case of the Rich Man in the Gospel; *when his Grounds brought forth so plentifully that he had no Room where to bestow his Fruits*, instead of laying by for Charity *as the Lord had prosper'd him*, instead of setting out, as a wise and faithful Steward would have set out, a just Proportion *for the Stranger, the Levite, the Fatherless, and the Widow; for loosing the heavy Burthen, for letting the Prisoner go free*; he turns his Thoughts intirely to the enlarging his Barns, and feasting his Senses, without the least Regard for his Fellow Servants, or Thankfulness *to the great God who had given the Increase*. Such is the Weakness of Man's Nature! Unable to bear abounding Blessings! And such is the Ground of that Caution given by *Moses* to his People, when God should bless thee with

riches, then — then especially to beware lest they forget the Lord, Deut. vi. 12.

And this same is the Ground of that strict Injunction given by St. Paul to Timothy, and in him to all Ministers of the Gospel, *to charge those who are rich in this World, that they be not high-minded nor trust in uncertain Riches, but in the Living God; that they do good, be ready to distribute, and so on —*. Intimating thereby, that an ordinary Exhortation was not sufficient for this Sort of extraordinary Men; they were to be press'd, it seems, *and authoritatively charged* to do their Duty, in this Article.

Fourthly, Another Reason why the Rich are more especially to be reminded of this Duty, arises from this Consideration, that they, if they happily avoid the Snares that lye in the Cumulations of Wealth, if they can take such heed, as neither to doat upon their Stores, nor dissipate them in Excesses; if they can preserve themselves from being elated by their Wealth, or enslaved by it, and learn to use it soberly, and in the Fear of God, are undoubtedly, of all Men, best qualify'd for the Duty of the Text, the Duty of abounding unto good Works, as they abound with the Means and Capacities for them; may, if they have the happy Turn, be as Gods to their Brethren, shower down upon them the Blessings of this Life, and the Helps to a better; do the Things that are great and good too, large as their Hearts, and great as their Fortunes.

Of this, *i. e.* of the great and good Things to be done by the Rich and Great, with their happy Effects, were we to produce Examples,

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this City alone would furnish Instances in abundance, Instances of wise, and faithful Men, who, by this godly Thrift, have adorn'd their Religion, and their Houses too. The yearly Increase of this City's Wealth, and Splendor, under the constant Growth of her Power, and Credit, famous, as it is, in all the World, is not more visible, than the happy Cause to which we piously ascribe it, namely, *The Blessing of God on the Liberality of her Citizens, abounding as we see it, unto so many Acts of Christian Charity, and publick Utility.*

In Proof of this, permit us, here, to read the good Report of this Year.

The Report read.

III. You, therefore, Right Honourable and Right Worshipful, whose Liberality is worthy to be praised, who have ministred to the Saints, and yet do minister, for your further Confirmation, under your further Advance in Wealth and Prosperity, suffer a Word of Exhortation, from the Consideration presented in the Text — *The Ability of God, here affirm'd to be able to make this Grace of Charity abound unto those that exercise it, so as to give them always all Sufficiency in all Things.*

Men have so many Invitations to do good, from Reason, and Religion, from outward Convenience, and inward Workings, from imprest Duty, and inbred Dispositions, that nothing could withhold them from gratifying their best and noblest Inclinations, and raising themselves thereby

thereby to the nearest Resemblance of God, who is good to all, but the Apprehensions of becoming Bankrupt by their Bounty, of exhausting the Fountains of their own Sufficiency, by drawing out too freely for the Relief of other Mens Wants. This grand Obstruction to all good and brave Designs, this common Refuge of all sordid, selfish, narrow-spirited Men; our Apostle here endeavours to take away, by asserting it to be, as indeed it is, a vain and groundless Terror; forasmuch as God who had given to his Servants *the Promises of the Life that now is, as well as of the Life that is to come*, and is able to perform those Promises, would, of very Faithfulness, so cause the Fruits of their Righteousness to abound, that they should be, not the poorer, but the richer for their Liberalities. And a wise Observer hath well remark'd; *that he that giveth to the Poor, lendeth to the Lord, and what he layeth out shall be paid him again!*

So that if amongst the good-natured and well disposed, some feel a Streightness and a Scantiness, as it may sometimes happen, they are not presently to impute this to the open Hand, or think God *slack in his Promises as some count Slackness*, 1 Pet. iii. 9. But are rather *to search and try their Ways*, try and examine whether they have indeed entitled themselves to the Blessings of the Righteous, *by being merciful according to their Power*; Or, whether some Root of Avarice, or some growing Luxury by pinching or paring off from *that Proportion of their Substance* which Justice and Gratitude appropriate to God's Honour and Service, hath not stopt the
Current

Current of his Blessings — Whether their withholding more than is meet hath not been *that Blemish in their Sacrifice* which hath hindered its Acceptance, *that ill-husbandry which hath occasioned their Poverty.*

For, so steadily hath God kept to his general Rule of honouring those who honour him with their Substance, that the Psalmist at a good old Age and Maturity of Experience could truly say, that in all his Life, *he had never seen the Righteous, i. e. the Merciful Man forsaken, or his Children in Distress.* Implying at least, that this Sort of Piety was the ordinary Road to Plenty! So that if any Man, in this Path, fell short of his Premium, it was to be counted a very uncommon Case; and even when God shall think fit to make such a Case, by putting off a pious Man's Reimbursement beyond this unfinished Scene, we are assured from this Text, that he shall have that which is equivalent to the fullest Reimbursement; a Sufficiency! A Mind content with what he hath! Shall, by the Grace of God, have the Wisdom to think his Provisions sufficient! *Shall, with his Godliness, have Contentment, which is great Riches!* — Great in themselves, and greater still, as they are an Evidence of the Riches of God's Grace bestow'd on his Heart, and, as such, an Earnest of that eternal Fulness and Felicity, which the Mercies of God, thro' the Merits and Intercession of *Christ*, Reserve for the Recompence of the Merciful, at the Resurrection of the Just.

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Now,

*Now, to the Author and Finisher of all good
Designs, to God the Father, Son and Holy
Ghost, by whom alone, all Grace is made to
abound in Mens Hearts, be ascribed, as is
due, all Honour, and Glory, Adoration,
and Praise, and Thanksgiving, World
without End. Amen.*

*The Peace of God, which passeth all Under-
standing, keep your Hearts and Minds in the
Knowledge and Love of God, and of his Son Jesus
Christ our Lord; and the Blessing of God Al-
mighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,
be amongst you, and remain with you always.
Amen.*

Now, to the Author and Finisher of all good Designs, to God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, by whom alone, all Grace is made to abound in Mens Hearts, be ascribed, as is due, all Honour, and Glory, Adoration, and Praise, and Thanksgiving, World without End. Amen.

The Peace of God, which passeth all Understanding, keep your Hearts and Minds in the Knowledge and Love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord; and the Blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be amongst you, and remain with you always. Amen.

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